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Rev. D. G. Haskins

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# WHAT IS CONFIRMATION,

OR THE

# LAYING ON OF HANDS?

THE QUESTION ANSWERED TO STRANGERS IN THE CHURCH.

## WITH AN APPENDIX,

SHOWING BY TESTIMONY THAT A CUSTOM SIMILAR TO CONFIRMATION ANCIENTLY EXISTED, AND IS STILL OBSERVED, AMONG THE JEWS.

BY THE

REV. DAVID GREENE HASKINS,

RECTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY, BRIGHTON, MASS.

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# Notice of Confirmation.

The Place_____

The Time_____

Presented to _____

By_____

# THE ORDER OF CONFIRMATION,

OR LAYING ON OF HANDS UPON THOSE WHO ARE BAPTIZED, AND COME TO YEARS OF DISCRETION.

¶ Upon the day appointed, all that are to be then confirmed, being placed and standing in order before the Bishop; he, or some other Minister appointed by him, shall read this Preface following.

TO the end that Confirmation may be ministered to the more edifying of such as shall receive it, the Church hath thought good to order, That none shall be confirmed, but such as can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; and can also answer to such other Questions, as in the short Catechism are contained: which order is very convenient to be observed; to the end, that children, being now come to the years of discretion, and having learned what their Godfathers and Godmothers promised for them in Baptism, may themselves, with their own mouth and consent, openly before the Church, ratify and confirm the same; and also promise, that, by the grace of God, they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things, as they, by their own confession, have assented unto.

¶ Then shall the Bishop say,

DO ye here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that ye made, or that was made in your name, at your Baptism; ratifying and confirming the same; and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which ye then undertook, or your Sponsors then undertook for you?

¶ And every one shall audibly answer,

I do.

*Bishop.*

OUR help is in the Name of the Lord;

*Answer.* Who hath made heaven and earth.

*Bishop.* Blessed be the Name of the Lord;

*Answer.* Henceforth, world without end.

*Bishop.* Lord, hear our prayer.

*Answer.* And let our cry come unto thee.

*Bishop.* Let us pray.

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by Water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins; Strengthen them, we beseech thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and daily increase in them thy manifold gifts of grace; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness; and fill them, O Lord, with the spirit of thy holy fear, now and for ever. *Amen.*

¶ Then all of them in order kneeling before the Bishop, he shall lay his hands upon the head of every one severally, saying,

DEFEND, O Lord, this thy Child [or, *this thy Servant*] with thy heavenly grace; that *he* may continue thine for ever; and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until *he* come unto thy everlasting kingdom. Amen.

¶ Then shall the Bishop say,

The Lord be with you.

*Answer.* And with thy spirit.

¶ And all kneeling down, the Bishop shall add,

Let us pray.

OUR Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

¶ And these Collects.

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, who makest us both to will and to do those things which are good, and acceptable unto thy Divine Majesty; We make our humble supplications unto thee for these thy servants, upon whom, after the example of thy holy Apostles, we have now laid our hands, to certify them, by this sign, of thy favour and gracious goodness towards them. Let thy fatherly hand, we beseech thee, ever be over them; let thy Holy Spirit ever be with them; and so lead them in the knowledge and obedience of thy Word, that in the end they may obtain everlasting life; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

O ALMIGHTY Lord, and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of thy laws, and in the works of thy commandments; that, through thy most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

¶ Then the Bishop shall bless them, saying thus,

THE Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be upon you, and remain with you for ever. *Amen.*

¶ And there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed.

## WHAT IS CONFIRMATION, OR THE LAYING ON OF HANDS?

A GENERAL answer to this question may be given in few words.

Confirmation is a religious ceremony of great antiquity in the Christian Church, which is observed as an introduction to the privileges of the Holy Communion. It is a rite intimately connected with Baptism, and is to be regarded as, in a certain sense, the completion of that sacrament, in which they who were baptized in infancy, being now of responsible age, take upon themselves the vows and promises made on their behalf by those who brought them to be baptized, and in which they who are baptized in adult years solemnly recognize and renew their baptismal obligations. The Bishop,[1] after the

[1] Bishops are the chief ministers. Says the Preface to "The Form and Manner of making Deacons," "It is evident unto all men, diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church, — Bishops, Priests, and Deacons."

To each Bishop is committed the oversight of all the churches within a certain defined territory, called a Diocese. In this country, the dioceses generally, but not invariably, correspond

example of the holy Apostles, lays his hands upon those who are presented to him, to certify them, by this sign, of God's favor and gracious goodness towards them, and invokes upon them the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

But a much more full and detailed explanation of Confirmation is demanded by the importance which the Church ascribes to this rite. We begin, then, by describing the outward ceremony of Confirmation.

At the proper time in the service, usually after the sermon, the Bishop being within the chancel, the minister of the parish calls upon all who are intending to be confirmed (and of whose desire and fitness to become communicants he has previously satisfied himself by personal interviews and examination) to present themselves before the Bishop. Upon this invitation, these persons, whether men, or women, or children who have come to the years of discretion, leaving their respective places in the congregation, go forward, and stand uncovered at the chancel-rail.

What follows will be better understood by re-

to the territorial limits of the States, and the authority of each Bishop is restricted to his own diocese.

The two powers peculiar to Bishops, and which inferior ministers, in accordance with the rules of the primitive Church, are never allowed to exercise, are the power of ordaining ministers, and that of confirming persons who have been baptized, and desire to partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

ferring to "The Order of Confirmation," printed as a preface to these remarks.

After the questions and answers and intercession there made, all kneel, and the Bishop proceeds to lay his hands upon their heads, repeating over each in turn the brief, but comprehensive prayer, "Defend, O Lord, this thy Servant with thy heavenly grace; that he may continue thine for ever; and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come unto thy everlasting kingdom." And then, after the few remaining prayers of the service, and, usually, an address from the Bishop, they return to their places in the church.

Such is the external and visible rite of Confirmation, which, as will be seen by reference to the rubric at the end of the "Order of Confirmation," all persons are required to receive, or to be ready and desirous to receive, before coming to the Holy Communion. Though it is short and simple, it is, in the highest degree, interesting and impressive to the beholder.

We come next to consider the religious significance of this rite, and the qualifications for it. Confirmation is something more than an outward form. It is not a mere religious ceremony, which requires no antecedent Christian instruction and no preparation of heart on the part of those who receive it. It is not a rite by which divine grace is of necessity conveyed to the soul, or by which a person is sanctified, or made an inheritor of the

kingdom of God, on simply consenting to receive the imposition of the Bishop's hands, without regard to the state of his mind, or the character of his desires, feelings, and resolutions, and of his present and future course of life.

On the contrary, Confirmation is an act of deep spiritual significance, and calls for corresponding spiritual qualifications. It implies, on the part of persons confirmed young, that they have been brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and have received faithful instruction in the Catechism contained in the Book of Common Prayer, and in the fundamental doctrines and duties of our religion; and it expects and requires of all, without exception, qualification, or condition, godly sorrow and repentance for sin, an earnest and living faith in Christ as the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind, and a hearty and settled purpose, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to walk after his example, and to keep his commandments.

In other words, Confirmation calls for an intelligent apprehension, and a willing and resolute assumption, or renewal, of the solemn obligations of Christian Baptism.

The leading question which the Bishop asks of those who come forward to be confirmed is, "Do ye here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that ye made, or that was made in your name, at your Baptism; ratifying and confirming the

same; and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which ye then undertook, or your Sponsors then undertook for you?"

Now, by referring to the services which are provided in the Book of Common Prayer for the administration of Baptism, the reader will be at no loss to discover what the obligations of this sacrament are. As in the Catechism "to be learned by every person before he be brought to be confirmed by the Bishop," in reply to the question, "What is required of persons to be baptized?" it is briefly answered, "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and Faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament;" so in the offices set forth for Baptism, the same obligations are more fully unfolded and explained. The persons baptized solemnly engage, "by God's help, to renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh, and not to follow, nor be led by them;" they avow their belief in "all the Articles of the Christian Faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed;" and promise, that, "by God's help, they will obediently keep his holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life." And the assurance which the minister in the exhortation is authorized by the Church to give, namely, that Christ will favorably receive the bap-

tized persons, is based upon these promises, and upon the condition of their "truly repenting, and coming unto him by faith."

To Confirmation, then, because it is so intimately related to and connected with Baptism,[1] attach all the solemnities and responsibilities and requirements which pertain to that primary and significant sacrament; and no one ought to esteem himself prepared to be confirmed without faithfully considering the full import of the vows and promises of Baptism, and being earnestly purposed, in divine reliance, to perform them.

And here let us turn our regards to the historical aspects of Confirmation. Under this head there are several points of interest, about which many persons desire information, and the consideration of which will further contribute to explain the character of this rite and the esteem in which it is held.

And, first, whence is it derived, or what is its origin? and what is the Scriptural authority for it?

It is by no means a rite of modern device or introduction, but dates back to the very beginning of the Christian Church, having been practised, as will presently be shown, by the Apostles themselves.

More even than this may be claimed. For, the Christian Church being descended from the divinely established Jewish Church, — Christ having come "not to destroy, but to fulfil," — everything that is

[1] Appendix, Notes 9, 16.

primitive in its institutions and usages finds its model or original in the earlier dispensation. Thus, the Christian Lord's Day corresponds to the Jewish Sabbath; Baptism, to Circumcision; the Lord's Supper, to the Passover; the Ministry, with its three orders of Bishop, Priests, and Deacons, to the Jewish Priesthood, with its answering divisions of High-Priest, Priests, and Levites.[1] Nor is Confirmation an exception; for it is a fact, well attested by ancient writers, that there existed among the Jews, in our Saviour's time, a ceremony similar in import, if not in form.[2] By this ceremony, children, who, in obedience to the Law of Moses, had been received at eight days old into the Jewish Church by Circumcision, and thereby made, as it was called, "Sons of the Covenant," were now, at the age of puberty, carried before the elders at Jerusalem to be examined by them, and, if found worthy, taken into responsible membership in the Church, being entitled "Sons of the Commandment," and bound thereafter to partake of the Passover. A similar custom obtains among the Jews of the present day.[3] We are told that this service was performed "with devout prayers and benedictions;"[4] and it is not unreasonable to infer that "the laying on of hands" was a part of the form, since the Jews regarded this particular method of giving solemnity to their acts

[1] As well as to the ministry of the synagogue. Appendix, Note 1.

[2] Notes 1–15. [3] Note 15. [4] Note 5.

as of Divine appointment, and never omitted it in any transactions of religious, or even of civil importance.[1]

In the opinion of many learned commentators, it was in compliance with this ceremony, that, as St. Luke informs us, the parents of our Lord, "when he was twelve years old, went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast."[2] "Jesus was most inwardly taught of the Father, although not without external and human instrumentality; and the Father's inner guidance even connects itself with the custom to take the youth of twelve years old first up to the feast to present them before the Lord."[3] It is believed, that, as our Saviour had been made in infancy "a Son of the Covenant" by Circumcision, he was now, at the period of personal responsibility, made "a Son of the Commandment" by the usual and approved ceremonies.

And if, as seems both reasonable and probable, our Lord complied with this custom, and, to the end that he might "fulfil all righteousness," consented to be brought, like the other Jewish youth, before the elders,[4] "that," in the very words of one of the ancient writers who describes this ceremony, "they might bless him, and confirm him, and pray over him, that he might be worthy in the Law and

1 Appendix, Note 14.

2 Luke ii. 42.

3 Stier's *Words of the Lord Jesus*, Vol. I. p. 24.

4 "Den Aeltesten," Note 8.

good works,"[1] — what sanction and solemnity does not this circumstance attach to the corresponding and equivalent rite of the Christian Church? With such an example of holy obedience before us, how can any be insensible to the obligation, by prayer and faith and repentance, to make that rite a means of grace to his soul?

The familiarity of the Jews with this custom accounts in part for its passing without any special remark into the practice of the early Christian Church. But the Evangelists relate, that, during the forty days which elapsed between our Lord's resurrection and his final ascension into heaven, he showed himself alive to his disciples by many infallible proofs, "*and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*"[2] From this declaration, as well as from the general conformity of the views and practice of the Apostles, it has been supposed that they must have received from our Lord, during this period, definite instructions concerning the rites and sacraments, discipline, worship, and planting of the Church.

However this may be, we find among the earliest proceedings of the Apostles two separate instances of Confirmation recorded by the inspired pen of St. Luke. The first, which is mentioned in the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, is that of the Samaritans who had been converted by the preaching of Philip, one of the seven deacons, who had

[1] Appendix, Note 7. [2] Acts i. 3.

lately been sent out from Jerusalem by the Apostles. And, "when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women." After which, it is added: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then *laid they their hands on them*, and they received the Holy Ghost."

The second instance of Confirmation, as recorded by St. Luke, is in the nineteenth chapter of the same book, and occurred at a somewhat later period. "Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul *had laid his hands upon them*, the Holy Ghost came

on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve."

Now here are two clearly authenticated cases of "the laying on of hands" in the very first days of the Christian Church, in both of which, it should be noticed, this rite succeeded Baptism, and was performed by the highest officers in the Church, namely, Apostles, or Bishops. And these cases are so narrated as to convey the impression that this was not an occasional, but a usual and general practice. That these two instances should have been transmitted to us in a book so brief, and entirely wanting in pretensions to historical completeness, as the Acts of the Apostles, is certainly remarkable, and may well be regarded as indicating the importance, which, in the purposes of God, attaches to the observance of this rite.

Nothing else would seem to be wanting to give universal authority to this apostolic observance but a recognition of it in some of the more general and formal of the inspired summaries of Christian duty. And this also is supplied. For, in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "*laying on of hands*" is specially mentioned in the enumeration of "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," — which also in the previous chapter are designated as "the first principles of the oracles of God;" and not only so, but it is mentioned immediately after Baptism, and is so coupled with it as fully to justify the view which we have seen the Church takes of it, that it

is in fact the proper completion of that primary sacrament. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ," says the Apostle, "let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and *of laying on of hands*, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit." These words would seem conclusively to show that "the laying on of hands" was not a practice for rare and exceptional cases; but that it is a part of the fixed and established system of Christianity, one of the rudimental doctrines, or teachings of Christ, which, like repentance, and faith, and baptism, and a belief in the resurrection and the judgment to come, ought to be received and accepted by all classes and conditions of people.

And here, leaving the testimony of the Scriptures, we might pass to that of the Fathers and of eminent Christian writers of every age, to prove that this same rite of "the laying on of hands," which we have seen in practice in the Apostolic period of our religion, was, for fifteen hundred years after Christ, as universally observed in all societies of the Christian Church as Baptism itself. But this is too extensive a field for present survey.

It may, however, be remarked, that no more convincing testimony on this point could be adduced than the antiquity of many of the prayers and rubrics and requirements relating to Confirmation

which are to be found in our Book of Common Prayer.[1] For, though these were not translated, and brought together substantially in their present form and connection, until the reign of King Edward VI. in 1549, yet they had existed and been in use in the earliest of the Latin and Greek Rituals, some of them for more than fourteen hundred years; and they indicate the common mind and teaching of the Church in the purest period, while as yet she was one and undivided, and stand, as they have stood during the ages, a monument to her continuance in the primitive faith and practice, wherever her authority has been acknowledged, even to the present day.

There remains but one other point connected with the historical view of Confirmation, which seems to call for explanation. We refer to the causes, which, at the time of the Reformation, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, contributed to bring this Apostolic rite, in some quarters, into disfavor and disuse, and which also account for its neglect in our own times by large and respectable bodies of Christians. It must not be supposed, however, that Confirmation was ever generally regarded, much less, formally or conventionally discarded, as an unnecessary and unscriptural addition to the ancient practices of the Church; for Calvin himself is known to have expressed an earnest wish that this rite might be retained in its original purity

[1] Appendix, 17, 18.

and design, while many of the sects have sought to compensate for its loss by devising ceremonies of equivalent import.

But the chief reason that Confirmation now began to fail of general observance was that it necessitated the order of Bishops in the ministry, who, as the successors of the Apostles, were alone regarded as authorized to administer this rite.[1] Some of the most ardent opponents of the gross errors and corruptions which had gradually crept into the Church, indignant at the usurpations of priestly power, in the heat of their zeal went to the extreme length of denying the Apostolic succession of the Christian ministry and the spiritual power of Bishops, and established religious societies in which any persons acceptable to the congregation might pray, or preach, or administer the sacraments. But with the rejection of Bishops came, as a natural and necessary consequence, the neglect of Confirmation.

It was, however, only a portion of the Reformers who went to this length. On the Continent of Europe, the Reformation was in great measure achieved by the commanding abilities and influence of a few great minds; and it was carried forward with so violent a popular zeal as to require a very general reconstruction of the Church. But in England, the purification of the Church was conducted not so much by individuals as by councils of learned

[1] Neander's *History of the Church*, Vol. I. p. 316.

and pious men; and there, it was less a work of destruction, and more of judicious, legitimate, and well-considered reformation. The divine framework of the Church was permitted to stand as it had stood from the beginning, while only the excrescences, the additions and blemishes with which man had vitiated its proportions and marred its beauty, were torn down or removed. The ministry, with its three orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, fashioned after the model of the Jewish Priesthood, or Synagogue, — just as it was when Christ himself was our Bishop, with the Apostles and the seventy under him, — just as it was after his ascension into heaven, when the Apostles were set in his own earthly relations over the Church, according to his saying, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me,"[1] and the seven deacons were presently ordained by them to fill the lowest order, — indeed, just as it everywhere existed, except as to the usurped powers of the Pope, until the Reformation, — this ministry, though, in the excitement of the times, abandoned or discarded by the most distinguished of the continental Reformers, was happily preserved in the Church of England, and, with it, the Apostolic rite of Confirmation; and, through that Church, both have come down to us, to the spiritual refreshing and comfort and strength, let us hope, of many generations of mankind.

[1] Luke xxii. 29.

Consider, now, how Confirmation commends itself to universal regard and observance.

Take even the lowest view of the nature of this rite; leave altogether out of sight its origin and sanction, and the office of the person who administers it; look at it simply as a solemn act of supplication to God, on the part of the individuals concerned and of the congregation assembled, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those who are about to approach, for the first time, to partake of the Lord's Supper; hear the words of that supplication: "Let thy fatherly hand, we beseech thee, ever be over them; let thy Holy Spirit ever be with them; and so lead them in the knowledge and obedience of thy Word, that in the end they may obtain everlasting life; through our Lord Jesus Christ." What objection can be made to such a prayer and such a ceremony? Could anything, indeed, be more appropriate? The things here asked for are desirable, and even essential to our salvation; they are such things as God wishes us to ask for, and such as he has promised to bestow in answer to our faithful petitions. Who that can say with the Psalmist, "O thou that hearest prayer," does not feel assured that such supplications, offered by the whole assembly of Christ's people, cannot fail to secure the notice of God, and call forth his richest spiritual blessings upon every penitent believer for whom they are invoked?

Or, go a step further. Look at this rite as a

public and solemn confession of the name of Christ. In this aspect, it is an act of simple obedience to a plain duty of universal obligation, commanded by Christ himself, and to the performance of which he has promised the very highest reward. These are his own words: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."[1] And to the same effect St. Paul declares, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation."[2] Now, Confirmation is eminently a confession of the name of Christ before men. The opening question which the Bishop addresses to the candidates sufficiently shows this: "Do ye here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow of your Baptism?" In no other rite is the opportunity for publicly confessing Christ so distinctly offered. And there can be no reasonable doubt that he who comes to Confirmation in the right spirit is made an inheritor of the glorious promise, "I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."[3]

But, taking that broad view of Confirmation which we have seen to be proper and even incumbent, —

[1] Matt. x. 32; Luke xii. 8 [2] Rom. x. 9, 10.
[3] Rev. iii. 5.

looking at it both in its historical and in its spiritual aspects, — as having the support, probably, of our Lord's example, as well as of Apostolic administration, and, in its intimate relations and reference to both the great sacraments of the Church; as an act in which the important vows of Baptism are assumed as a proper and required preparation for the reception of the Holy Communion, while the Bishop apostolically invokes upon those who participate in it the gifts of the Holy Ghost, that is, in the language of the prayer, "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and the spirit of thy holy fear," — taking this comprehensive and just view of the rite of Confirmation, how surpassing the interest and importance which invest it! Who can fail to appreciate the strength of its influence, as an instrumentality for bringing mankind into personal acquaintance and connection with Christ? What is there in any of the services or ceremonies of Christian worship better adapted to secure attention, or impress the mind, or engage the feelings, or that is more appropriate and serious as a form either for self-consecration or for benediction? And where, except in the sacraments themselves, is it possible to find an act of more profound religious meaning? For, of all the unspeakably precious promises of God, — the gifts and graces needful for the leading of a godly and a Christian life, as well

as the blessed comforts and consolations of Religion, even the assurance of God's forgiveness and favor, and of everlasting life, — there are none which Confirmation does not formally pledge and ratify to all who truly repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, promising that, "by God's help," they will "obediently keep His holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life."

Such is Confirmation. In its connection with Baptism, it is, as it were, the outer porch of the visible Church of Christ, the appointed and usual way of entrance into the temple of our Lord's spiritual presence, where he has promised to be found of his faithful people, even unto the end of the world. It is also one of the most important of those "means of grace" which God has distributed along the pathway of eternal life, to assist and encourage his creatures to attain to its final goal. In either aspect, its benefits are commensurate and identical with the benefits of Religion itself; while its special bestowment — the gift of the Holy Ghost — is absolutely indispensable to the renewal of the heart, and to that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."[1]

It is not, then, without strong and sufficient reasons that the Church holds up this Apostolic rite to the most serious regard and devout and hearty reception of all mankind.

[1] Heb. xii. 14.

The love of God in giving his only-begotten Son, embraced the whole world;[1] and our Lord said of himself, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."[2]

In the same spirit, the Church makes no discrimination, calling upon all alike to turn from their sins and wickedness, to love and serve Christ, and to become "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."[3] But, accounting it her chief duty "to seek and to save that which was lost,"[4] she addresses her most earnest invitations and entreaties to the unbelieving, the indifferent, the worldly-minded, the ungodly, the outcast, the abominable, — to all who are the enemies of the cross of Christ. This is the field in which she especially labors to gather up sheaves for the garner of her Lord. It is, in particular, to such persons that she relates the story of God's redeeming love. She tells them of the sufferings and death of Christ, endured on their behalf. She reminds them that their souls are still the object of his yearning desire. She assures them of his willingness and power to save to the uttermost all that will come unto God through him. She urges them, by every motive that can stir the heart, to turn from their vanities and sins unto the living God. Pointing to the Ark of Christ's Church, in which they may "pass in safety the waves of this troublesome world," she

1 John iii. 16; 2 Pet. iii. 9.
2 Mark ii. 17.
3 Eph. ii. 19.
4 Luke xix. 10.

earnestly and continually exhorts them, with broken and contrite hearts to betake themselves thereto, and find peace with God through the atoning blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.[1] With outstretched hands, her ministers stand waiting to set upon their foreheads in Baptism the sign and the seal of God's forgiveness and blessing; and her Bishops, to supplicate upon them the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

And in all this she is but faithful to her holy calling, repeating the words of the Lord Jesus himself, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."[2]

Reader, are you among those to whom this appeal is made? Then, why will you not respond to it? Let not the thought of the wickedness of your heart or life rise up to forbid the hope of your pardon and reconciliation with God. For, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."[3] However far you may be from the kingdom of heaven, or however near to it, that kingdom is open to you, through him who is the door thereof. Why, then, will you not be persuaded to enter therein, and have the glorious promises of the Gospel sealed and covenanted to you?

Oh, remember that "but one thing is needful!"[4]

[1] Rev. xiii. 8.
[2] Matt. xi. 28.
[3] Isaiah i. 18.
[4] Luke x. 42.

Repent yourself truly of your sins past; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour; amend your life, and be in perfect charity with all men: so shall you be a meet partaker of the holy mysteries of the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood;[1] so shall you choose "that good part" which shall not be taken away from you.[2]

"Just as I am, — without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
With fears within and foes without,
O Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am, — poor, wretched, blind, —
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am, — thy love, now known,
Has broken every barrier down;
And to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come." ELLIOTT.

1 See the exhortation in the Communion Service.
2 Luke x. 42.

# APPENDIX.

The following notes give the authorities mainly relied upon to show that a custom similar to confirmation formerly existed, and is still observed, among the Jews; together with other facts of interest touching upon the general subject of these pages.

The custom referred to seems to have been particularly connected with the worship of the Synagogue.

## Note 1.

There was a wide difference between the Temple worship and the worship of the Synagogue. The latter, indeed, was no doubt derived from the former, and was largely shaped by it. But there was only one Temple, and that was for the whole nation. The Temple was the sphere of the hereditary priesthood; and there were the distinctively national feasts and fasts of the Jewish religion observed, the typical sacrifices made, and the offerings of the whole people brought. Accordingly, the worship of the Temple was of the most stately and imposing character.

The synagogues, on the contrary, were many, and were centres of local, instead of universal resort, for the people of certain districts, and not for the collective nation. They were not places for sacrifice, but for worship and instruction. The Aaronic priesthood had no necessary connection with the synagogues, though a complimentary precedence was conceded to its members when present. But the synagogues had a government and ministry of their own. The worship of the Synagogue was that of simple and edifying devotion, into which mind and heart could alike enter. In the synagogues, not "Moses" only, but "the prophets" were read every Sabbath day, and thus the Messianic hopes of Israel, the expectation of a kingdom of heaven, were universally diffused. The way was silently prepared for a new

and higher order which should rise, in the "fulness of time," out of the decay and abolition of both the Priesthood and the Temple.

We cannot separate the synagogue from the most intimate connection with our Lord's life and ministry. It was in the synagogues that he worshipped during his youth, and in his manhood. Whatever, therefore, we can learn of the ritual that then prevailed, tells us of a worship which Jesus recognized and sanctioned, and which, for that reason, if no other, is worthy of our respect and honor. The Apostles, too, preached in the synagogues; and synagogues are supposed to have been gradually converted into Christian churches. Widely divergent as the two words, and the things they represented, afterwards became, the Church had its starting-point in the Synagogue; and to this source may be referred the main features of our ecclesiastical worship and government, — the use of fixed and responsive forms of prayer, the custom of reading and expounding lessons from the Scriptures, the gradation in the orders of the ministry, the mode of ordination, and other minor details.

It was necessary for the formation of a synagogue that there should be a board or college of at least ten learned men. One exercised a primacy, and was the superintendent of all the public service. He was called "the Angel of the Church," "the Bishop of the Congregation." His peculiar office was to bless and pray for the congregation. There were also presbyters, and deacons or almoners; that is, there were three classes or orders of ministers. They were ordained by the imposition of hands. There was also in every synagogue a civil triumvirate, — three magistrates, whose office it was to decide differences, etc. These were "the rulers of the synagogue." See Buxtorf, *Synag. Judaic.;* Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae,* Vol. II. pp. 308, *et seq.;* and *The Divine Right of Forms,* etc., part ii. ch. 6. Also, *Orig. Heb.,* by Thos. Lewis, Vol. II. pp. 425, *et seq.;* Vitringa *de Otiosis* in Ugolini, *Thes. Antiq. Sac.* xxi. 297, *and de Synag., passim;* and Smith's *Dict. of Bible,* Art. *Synagogue.*

NOTE 2.

"Puer Judæus, anno decimo tertio, *Bar Mitzvah* (filius præ-

cepti) primum appellatur; hoc est, lex obedientiæ illi indicitur; et tum demum oportet illum sexcenta et tredecim præcepta, quæ in se summam et argumentum totius legis Mosaicæ et Judaicæ religionis complectuntur, observare;" etc. — Buxtorf, *Synag. Judaic.*, c. iii. pp. 112, 113.

NOTE 3.

"A child is deemed of age at thirteen years and one day old, and from that time commences to sin on his own account; for, before, his father was answerable for him. He is declared of age before ten Jews, to whom the father gives a particular account of the care he has taken of the child, and concludes with a declaration that he washes his hands from all the iniquities which in his youth he might be guilty of. The witnesses confirm the declaration, and then the father says a prayer suitable to the occasion." — Buxtorf, cited by Leo of Modena, p. 236.

NOTE 4.

"Is qui annum implevit xiii. legibus tenebatur, et vocabatur, *Bar Mitzvah*, filius præcepti." — Grotius, Note on Luke ii. 42.

NOTE 5.

"They who have taken pains in examining the institutions and customs of the Jews observe this commendable one among the rest, that their youth were brought before some masters of the synagogue, to render an account of their proficiency in religion, and thenceforth to be answerable for their own sins. This ceremony was performed with strict examination, with devout prayers, and solemn benedictions." — *Com. on the Epists. and Gosps.*, by George Stanhope, D. D., Dean of Cant., Vol. II. p. 28.

NOTE 6.

"Their youth were usually thirteen before they were brought before the masters of the synagogue, to give an account of their proficiency in religion (which answers in a great measure to the rite of Christian Confirmation). Yet since the season thus

appointed was accommodated to the capacities and attainments of children in general, without forbidding those of qualifications extraordinary, and whose genius, in the Jewish phrase, *did run before the commandment*, to appear sooner, our Saviour might offer himself to examination a year before the common time. And this is the best reason that can be offered for his staying behind his parents, when he could not but know they were departed from Jerusalem without him, and for his being found in one of the rooms adjoining the temple, where the doctors of the law used to meet to resolve questions, and likewise to examine and confirm such of the youth as they found to be qualified," etc. — Stackhouse, *Hist. of the Bible*, b. viii. ch. i.

## Note 7.

"According to the maxims of the Jews, persons were not obliged to the duties of the Law, or subject to the penalties of it in case of non-performance, until they were, a female at the age of twelve years and one day, and a male at the age of thirteen years and one day; but then they used to train up their children, and inure them to the exercise of it before. . . . It is said[1] that 'there was a good custom in Jerusalem, to make their little sons and daughters fast on a fast-day; the son of a year till the very day he is twelve years old, when he fasts the whole day; and after that, they carry him and bring him before every ancient man, that he may bless him, and confirm him, and pray over him, that he may be worthy in the law and good works; and this is to learn them that they are beautiful, and their works beautiful and acceptable to God.'" — Gill's *Expos. of the N. T.*, Note on Luke ii. 42.

## Note 8.

"Hernach brachten sie ihn zu den Aeltesten, auf das sie ihn segneten, confirmirten, und über ihn beteten, damit er im Gesetze

[1] *Massecheth Sopherim*, c. 18, s. 5. The work here referred to is סוֹפְרִים מַסֶּכֶת, h. e. *Tractatus Scriborum*. "Capita ejus xxi. in edit. Talmud Amstelod. in calce partis iv. post Massecheth Avoth." *Wolfii Biblioth.*

"It is held in high esteem, and is studied by those who are intended for the clerical station." — M. J. Raphall, D. D.

und in den guten Werken tüchtig würde," etc. — *Massecheth Sopherim*, c. 18, s. 5, quoted by Sepp. *Das Leben Jesu*, Vol. II. p. 172.

NOTE 9.

"The imposition of hands, accompanied by prayer, with which the act of Baptism was concluded, is, beyond doubt, a still older custom [than anointing]. The sign of the imposition of hands was the common token of religious consecration, borrowed from the Jews, and employed on various occasions, either to denote consecration to the Christian calling in general, or to the particular branches of it. The Apostles, or presiding officers of the Church, laying their hands on the heads of the baptized individual, called upon the Lord to bestow his blessing on the holy transaction now completed; to cause to be fulfilled in him whatever was implied in it; to consecrate him with his Spirit for the Christian calling; and to pour out his Spirit upon him. This closing rite was inseparably connected with the whole act of Baptism. All, indeed, had reference here to the same principal thing, without which no one could be a Christian, — the birth to a new life from God, the baptism of the Spirit, which was symbolically represented by the baptism of water." — Neander's *Hist. of the Church*, Vol. I. p. 315. Compare, also, Stillingfleet, *The Divine Right of Forms*, part ii. ch. 6.

NOTE 10.

"Our Lord's presence at the Passover at the age of twelve was in accordance with Jewish custom. At that age the Jewish boys began to be instructed in the Law, to be subject to the fasts, and to attend regularly the feasts, and were called the Sons of the Law.[1] This, however, is called in question by Greswell,[2] who asserts that boys did not become subject to ordinances till they had reached the age of fourteen years, and that the purpose for which Jesus was taken up to the temple at twelve was not to celebrate the Passover, but to be 'made a disciple of the Law, and to undergo a ceremony something like to our Confirmation.'" — Andrews, *Life of our Lord*, p. 102.

[1] Meyer, on Luke ii. 42.

[2] E. Greswell, *On the Principles of a Harmony of the Gospels*

NOTE 11.

"Our Lord went up with his parents to Jerusalem, possibly as a partaker in some preparatory rite which ancient custom might have associated with that age of *commencing* puberty." — C. J. Ellicott's *Hist. Lectures*, p. 93.

NOTE 12.

"The age of twelve years (which was considered the age of puberty, and was that when the children were put to learn some trade) was, as appears from the Rabbinical writers, that at which the above obligation [to go up to Jerusalem] was thought binding; when, too, boys were solemnly introduced into the Church, and initiated in its doctrines and ceremonies." — Bloomfield, *Greek Test.*, Note on Luke ii. 42.

NOTE 13.

See also Wheatly, *On the Book of Com. Prayer*, p. 377. Also an excellent tract on *The Proper Age for Confirmation*, by Samuel Fuller, D. D.

NOTE 14.

Concerning the antiquity and use of the custom of laying on of hands, see *Antiq. Heb. Georgii Ursini* and *Tosaphtha Menacoth*, Vol. XXI. p. 895, and Vol. XIX. p. 694; Ugolini, *Thes. Ant. Sac.*; and Stillingfleet, *The Divine Right of Forms*, part ii. ch. 6.

NOTE 15.

*Confirmation as now observed among the Jews.*

"The Jews have a rite called '*Bar Mitzvah*,' which invariably takes place on the Sabbath after the youth has completed thirteen years and one day. In Eastern Europe and in America, the youth is called up in the synagogue to read the Law. He pronounces the blessing, in which he thanks the Lord for having chosen us from among all nations and given us his Law. He then reads a section, and sometimes the whole of the weekly reading of the Law for that Sabbath, and concludes with another blessing, in which he thanks the Lord for having given us the Law of truth and life eternal.

"The friends then go home to the house of his parents, who receive congratulations. From that time he is a member of the synagogue, and in all respects an Israelite.

"In Poland and the East of Europe, where the religion is held holy, and in Asia and Africa, the same ceremony is observed; but, in addition, and whenever the youth is able, he delivers an exhortation, called '*Derasha*,' in which he examines a certain portion of the Law. The audience offer objections, which he must answer and remove. So that the whole is a solemn and interesting rite.

"This is the Confirmation observed among Jews.

"The origin of this ceremony is probably in some time of the first or second Temple. The traditional works of the Jews mention it as existing and in general use." — M. J. Raphall, D. D., in a letter replying to inquiries by the writer of these pages.

NOTE 16.

"The rite of Confirmation was regarded as an appendix to the sacrament of Baptism. Not, indeed, that Baptism was in any way imperfect or invalid without Confirmation; but that the grace which the Holy Spirit communicated at Baptism was increased and strengthened by Confirmation." — Palmer's *Origines Lit.* p. 201.

NOTE 17.

"In every ritual now extant in the world, whether of the Western or Eastern Churches, we find a similar form [for Confirmation] to that of the English ritual, which has been used by our Church for above twelve hundred years." — *Idem.* p. 206.

NOTE 18.

"The prayer beginning, 'Almighty and everliving God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants,' etc., is one of very great antiquity, and as it is found in the Sacramentary of Gelasius, of Gregory, and of many of the Western Churches, we may say it is at least as old as the year 494; but it is probably much more ancient." — *Idem.* p. 206.

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